

THE ANTI-METRIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

B.M. Perfect, London, W.C.1.

Autumn 1992

SORRY FOR THE DELAY!

Those of you who have been members since the early days of the Society will not have heard from us for a considerable time. Please accept our apologies for this. We have not been idle and, as you can see, we have not ceased to exist. The workload was getting to be rather too much for the two ladies who founded the Society but, now that it has been spread among others as well, we will be in contact with you much more frequently; the next issue of Imperial Resistance should be out in the near future.

A few of you have written in to ask about renewing your subscriptions to the Society. Do not worry: we will let you know when they fall due. Subscriptions will not be paid annually but will run until they are used up, so we hope you will get value for money.

PATRONS

We are delighted to announce that two distinguished gentlemen have agreed to become patrons of the Anti-Metric Society.

Dr Patrick Moore, the astronomer, will be known to all. A great believer in Imperial measures, he wrote in Imperial Resistance 2, that his personal motto is "For Ever Fahrenheit!".

Mr Michael Wharton is better known as "Peter Simple", whose column appeared in the Daily Telegraph for many years and is now in the Sunday Telegraph. His two volumes of autobiography, "The Missing Will" and "A Dubious Codicil" have recently been republished in one book, which makes for fascinating reading.

We thank both our patrons for their valued support.

BRANCHES ANYONE?

As membership of the Anti-Metric society grows, it makes sense to consider the formation of local branches. At the moment, membership is patchy but there are some areas where there are enough

members to warrant starting a branch.

At this early stage we should like to hear from anyone who would consider organising a branch. If you are interested, please write and let us know; you will be committing yourself to nothing!

BOOKLET

Enclosed with this newsletter is a copy of the booklet "Yards, Gallons and Golden Sovereigns", written and produced by A.M.S. supporter Miss Hope Bourne. We are sure you will find it interesting and useful. Our only quibble is the use of the past tense in the text. Imperial measures are part of our history, but it is up to us to ensure that they are also part of our future.

Further copies of the booklet can be had from the Society at £1 for one copy and 15/- for each additional copy, postage paid.

ENVELOPE STICKERS

Also enclosed are ten stickers which we hope you will stick on outgoing mail to encourage others to join the Society. If you would like some more, please write to us. There is no charge.

LETTERS TO LOCAL NEWSPAPERS

The Society is in the process of writing to local newspapers throughout the United Kingdom, explaining our aims and inviting readers to write to us for more details. The response has been very encouraging and several of the members reading this newsletter will first have heard of us in this way.

If you should see one of these letters in your local paper, please write a letter in response to it. A couple of sentences saying how much you agree with the sentiments and urging others to join the Society is enough; the important thing is to get people thinking. Of course, you do not have to wait until you see

our letter before writing! If you do have a letter published, please send us a copy for our records.

Those of you who, for whatever reason, would prefer not to write to the press but would still like to help in some way are invited to sponsor our campaign. Although we will be writing to hundreds of newspapers all over the country, there are many more to which we cannot afford to write. If you send a donation of £1, this will enable us to write to three more papers and also write to you to let you know what response we have had from them. If you like, you can specify which county or area you would like the newspapers to be in, or you can leave it to us. Either way, the papers will be ones to which we would not have written without your donation.

Please send donations (postal orders, cheques - payable to "Perfect Publications" - or stamps) to the usual address and please do not be surprised if you do not hear from us for a couple of months; some of the newspapers we write to are only published monthly!

AU REVOIR TO THE FLORIN

By the time you read this, most of you will have seen one of the new, smaller two-shilling pieces. When the old florins cease to be legal tender (at the end of June next year) our coinage will contain no pre-decimal coins and no coins bearing the head of a monarch other than our present Queen. Another link with our past will have gone.

The florin was the last coin of the £.s.d. system to be introduced. First minted in 1849, it was to have been the first step on the road to a decimal currency (the first florins were inscribed "One Florin - One Tenth of a Pound"). Nothing came of the attempt at decimalisation (perhaps politicians took note of public opinion in those days) and the words "One Tenth of a Pound" were soon dropped. The florins in circulation today are the same size as those of 1849 (although those were, of course, made of silver) but there is a dignity and a

solidity about the old coins that is completely lacking in today's "ten pence" pieces.

I hope all our members will, over the next few months, put aside a few "two bob bits", George VI as well as Elizabeth II, to show to children and grandchildren in the years to come and to remind themselves of a part of our culture that has been temporarily suppressed. For, convinced as I am that sooner or later our country will come to its senses, I look forward with a sure and certain hope to the return of the shilling and its big brothers, the florin and half-crown.

C.I.B.

The Campaign for an Independent Britain recently advertised the Anti-Metric Society in its journal "Independence" and we are now pleased to do the same for them.

Many of you will already be members of the C.I.B. (I know that at least two of our members are secretaries of local branches) but those of you who are not might be interested in finding out more about Britain's leading anti-E.E.C. organisation.

The aims of the Campaign are: "To halt the drive towards political, economic and monetary union in the E.E.C. and to regain for Britain the rights, freedoms and powers of an independent nation."

Membership is £10 p.a. (£5 for retired people) and this, or further details, can be obtained from 81 Ashmole St, London, S.W.8.

METRIC ROAD SIGNS

There have been recent reports in the national press that Britain will change to metric road signs by the year 2007. A spokesman for the Department of Transport said that "Britain has exemption from an E.C. harmonisation directive and our policy is to carry on with Imperial signs until the majority of people in Britain have been educated in the metric system".

So much for Britain being "allowed to keep" the mile and the pint. How long will it be before our milk and (God forbid!) our beer

are sold by foreign measure?

A Welsh member of the Society suggests that the time has come for a mass lobby of M.P.s on the subject of metrcation. We understand his desire to do something but have our doubts about the effectiveness of such action. In any case, the Society is not yet strong enough to undertake such a thing.

However, we do urge all members to write to their M.P.s (at the House of Commons, London, S.W.1.) expressing in the strongest terms their opposition to any further metrcation. You should also write to the Prime Minister (The Rt Hon. John Major, M.P., 10, Downing Street, S.W.1.), asking him to reconcile the fact that our ancient weights and measures are being sacrificed in the interests of "European harmonisation" with his assurance that "closer European union will not mean that the British will be any less British". You might also mention that the preamble to the Maastricht Treaty (which he has probably not bothered to read) speaks of the heads of state of the signatory countries "Desiring to deepen the solidarity between their peoples while respecting their history, their culture and their traditions." We will be interested to hear details of your replies.

LANDLORD FINED

We finish on a happier note. In August the landlord of The Dolphin Tavern in Slough, Berkshire was fined £3,100 plus £210 costs for selling beer in foreign measures. Under the law, beer may only be sold by the third of a pint, half-pint or multiples of half a pint. Mr Nigel France, the landlord, had been selling beer in continental glasses holding seven and 12 1/4 fluid ounces.

The mischievous Mr France claimed that he had introduced the continental glasses to try to get people to come for the atmosphere of his pub, rather than heavy drinking. He also claimed that "the serving of brimful pints, to be slopped over the bar, furnishings and customers, isn't social."

Neither of these arguments stand up to scrutiny. If Mr France were to serve beer by the third- and half-pint he would be serving it in smaller quantities than his foreign glasses hold. If he is concerned about the clumsiness of his barmaids and customers, he could use oversized glasses with the appropriate measure marked on the side.

To suggest that Imperial measures in some way encourage drunkenness is, of course, rubbish and Mr France does not really believe it. He thinks that serving beer in continental glasses is "chic" and trendy. No doubt he is one of those people who believe everything continental is superior to its British counterpart. In some cases, and on a purely utilitarian level, he is no doubt right. But there are some things higher than logic and materialism. There are history, tradition and identity. The British have always done things differently from others. Sometimes the British way is not the most logical way, but it is our way and it often has a charm which the foreign way lacks. But I do not suppose that this is something Mr France, or Mr Major for that matter, can even begin to understand.

I do not imagine that the "atmosphere" of The Dolphin is one that I would find conducive, and I bet the beer is awful as well. However, one pub that does sound as if it is worth a visit, if you are ever in the area, is The Rose & Crown, North Parade, Oxford. Prices there are given in real money (but, unfortunately, not at pre-decimalisation prices!); there is no piped "music" (although a pianist plays on Tuesday nights) and the landlord formally introduces strangers to the regulars. I have not visited it myself and should be interested to hear from anyone who does.

THE ANTI-METRIC SOCIETY WISHES
ALL MEMBERS & SUPPORTERS
A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS
